Meditation

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It is a well known fact that meditation reduces stress, but researchers are beginning to know, with the aid of advanced brain-scanning technology, that meditation directly affects the structure and function of the brain, bringing about changes in such a way that it appears to increase attention span, sharpen focus and improve memory.

In previous studies, focusing on Buddhist monks, Boston-area workers practiced a meditation called mindfulness or inside meditation.

There was also the experiment of Dr. Newberg, together with his colleague Eugene D'Aquili, M.D., in which the SPECT machine (single photon emission computed tomography) which they invented, allowed them to test their theoretical model and capture the now-famous snapshot of the brain in the moment of spiritual transcendence, a state known in its highest form as Samadhi, or Absolute Unitary Being, a term they coined. The technique is as follows:

> "The images he captured showed that the brain's prefrontal cortex, called the seat of attention, lit up in a brilliant

vermillion, indicating an increase in blood-flow, or neural activity, due to the meditator's state of deep concentration. However, the upper rear area of the brain, known as the orientation association area, had gone dark, turning a deep shade of blue. This is where we get our ability to orient ourselves in space and time, which gives our bodies a sense of physical limits. It is also where the brain 'makes' our sense of an individual 'self' existing in — and apart from — the physical universe.

The darkness in this area told Newberg that when a meditator took a metaphorical dive inside, the entire world receded, effectively blocking the sensory input that ordinarily streams into our brains. With no information flowing into that area, the brain cannot create a boundary between self and the entire world, or locate itself in physical reality [as an individual doer of deeds] — ~~but~~. As a result, Newberg explains, it the brain has no choice but to perceive the self as endless, interwoven with everyone and everything.

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One recent study found evidence that the daily practice of meditation thickened the parts parts of the brain's cerebral cortex responsible for decision making, attention and memory. Sara Lazar, a research scientist at Massachusetts General Hospital, is reported to have presented preliminary results towards the end of the year 2005, that showed that the gray matter of 20 men and women who meditated 40 minutes a day was thicker than that of people who did not meditate.

"We showed for the first time that you don't have to do it all day for similar results," says Sara Lazar. Also, her research suggests that meditation may slow the natural thinning of that section of the cortex that occurs with age.

The forms of meditation usually involve focusing on an image or a mantra or a sound or on one's natural breathing. Though deceptively simple, the practice seems to exercise the parts of the brain that help us to pay attention. "Attention is the key to learning, and meditation helps you voluntarily regulate it," says Richard

Davidson, director of the Laboratory for Affective Neuroscience, at the University of Wisconsin. Since 1992, he has collaborated with the Dalai Lama to study the brains of Tibetan monks, whom he calls "the Olympic athletes of meditation." Using caps with electrical sensors placed on the monks' heads, Davidson has picked up unusually powerful gamma waves that are better synchronized in the Tibetans than they are in novice meditators. Studies have linked this gamma-wave synchrony to increased awareness.

Studies say that meditation also improves productivity, in large part by preventing stress-related illness and reducing absenteeism. Meditation also clearly seems to help regulate emotions, which in turn helps people to get along more harmoniously. Says Davidson:

> "One of the most important domains meditation acts upon is emotional intelligence — a set of skills far more consequential for life success than cognitive intelligence."

What is not realised is that there can be no entity to do anything – or cease doing anything – that which has directly, volitionally caused the change-over / Indeed it is the clear APPERCEPTION, as such, (not by any individual) of this fact which brings about the absence of any "you" looking or not looking for anything to achieve, a sort of vacuum or vacancy, a 'fasting of the mind' which invites the presence that is the real "you" (I, not 'me'). This is how Para-vritti happens or comes about.

Do understand, urges Shri Maharaj, that objects and their Gunas (attributes) are not as they are perceived by the senses and interpreted by the split mind as subject and object, but that all of them, including the human beings are merely appearances in consciousness – and finally, therefore, they, as objects, can not and need not be "liberated".